

## Rep. Lofgren Says Republican 527 "Reform" is Embarrassment

Media Contact: Kyra Jennings, 202.225.3072, [kyra.jennings@mail.house.gov](mailto:kyra.jennings@mail.house.gov)

WASHINGTON, DC – Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-San Jose) offered the following statement today on the House floor in opposition to H.R. 513, the 527 Reform Act of 2005:

"Yesterday, former Majority Leader Tom DeLay announced that he is resigning from the House.

"His former aids Michael Scanlon and Tony Rudy have pled guilty for their involvement in the Jack Abramoff corruption affair. Other aids to DeLay and other current Members of this body remain under investigation.

"Last November, Republican Congressman Duke Cunningham resigned from Congress for taking over \$2 million in bribes from a Defense contractor. He is now serving an 8 year prison sentence for his crimes.

"The House Ethics Committee is broken and has done no work in the past 15 months. The Committee managed to have its first meeting of the 109th Congress last week. On Sunday, The Washington Post said that "The panel's inactivity in the face of scandal is itself scandalous."

"Today's bill is being characterized as important campaign finance reform by the House Republicans. The question is, what would this bill do to address the countless Republican scandals that are currently engulfing Washington?

"The answer is nothing. H.R. 513 will do absolutely nothing. This bill does nothing to address these very serious charges of corruption. It would do nothing to prevent another Jack Abramoff or Duke Cunningham scandal. The bill would actually make this kind of corruption easier by removing all limits on state and local campaign contributions.

"Since this Republican-crafted bill would do nothing to reverse the Republican culture of corruption, let's look at this bill on its merits to see what it actually does.

"This proposal would curtail the free speech rights of millions of Americans. The bill would limit the ability of average citizens to band together and speak out about issues, both during and beyond election periods.

"It would also limit participation in our electoral process. Many of the organizations that will be impaired by this legislation play a critical role in increasing public interest and participation in our electoral system.

"In 2004, 527 organizations helped to educate and register voters across the country. Voters were motivated like never before to get involved and cast their vote. This was a good thing for our democracy, and the bill before us today would reverse this progress.

"The 2002 Shays-Meehan-McCain-Feingold bill was real reform and had a clear purpose: to take members of Congress out of the business of asking lobbyists and special interest for large unregulated donations.

"527 organizations however are not made up of elected officials. In fact, 527's are barred from coordinating with officeholders, candidates or public officials. By law, these groups are independent. I am not aware of any allegations that there was illegal coordination between 527's and political parties in 2004. If anyone knows of coordination with a 527 and any of these groups, they have the responsibility to go to the Attorney General and report this. No one has. Despite this, Republicans want to shut them down. They are creating a solution for a problem that does not exist.

"This bill will only limit the ability of citizens to associate, organize and speak out. This is clearly unconstitutional and the

Supreme Court has already addressed this issue.

"In *Buckley v. Valeo*, the Court upheld limitations on contributions as appropriate legislative tools to guard against the reality or appearance of improper influence stemming from candidates' dependence on large campaign contributions. However, *Buckley* also invalidated limitations on independent expenditures, on candidate expenditures from personal funds, and on overall campaign expenditures. The Court ruled that that these provisions placed direct and substantial restrictions on the ability of candidates, citizens, and associations to engage in First Amendment protected free speech.

"This bill conflicts with the *Buckley* ruling. It violates people's constitutional right of free speech and association.

"So why are we considering this bill today? I suspect because this is a last ditch effort for the Republicans to keep their hold on power. They've read the polls. They know that most Americans are going to support Democrats this November. The Republicans are losing on issue after issue so they are going to try to change the rules to keep themselves in power over the wishes of the majority of Americans.

"Let me finish by reviewing the ethics rules that this Congress has passed this year. At the beginning of the year, shortly after Jack Abramoff pled guilty, House Republicans boldly pushed through their reform plan for Congress. What did their plan to crack down on ethics do? It banned former Members from lobbying in the House gym and on the House floor. So America, you can rest easy knowing that at least the cesspool of Republican corruption at the stairmaster is no more.

"The country should be embarrassed by Bush's Republican Congress, embarrassed by the scandals that have taken place so far, and embarrassed by the scandals that are bound to take place in the future."